Comanchería

Comanches and their Kiowa allies preferred to camp near a running stream in open timber. Along meandering creek valleys toward the headwaters of larger streams, where there were adequate canyons, arroyos, and breaks for protection, abundant grass for the large horse herds, ample buffalo and antelope for food, wood for the campfires, and sweet water for drinking, were to be found the Comanche villages. A large camp sometimes extended several miles along a stream or forest edge. A Comanche village which lay east of the Wichita Mountains in 1834 is reported to have extended along Cache Creek from Medicine Bluff north to Chandler Creek and southward to Wolf Creek, a distance of fifteen miles.[20]

Within the camp itself there appears to have been no required plan. If the terrain was favorable, the lodges might be grouped in a rough circular fashion about the lodge of the chief. In another village, the lodges might appear to follow a rectangular plan. There were usually as many groups of lodges as there were leaders, the lodges of the most important men being located nearest that of the leader.[21] There was no privacy in the camp, for neighbors entered and left a tipi at will. While busy wives performed their daily tasks of preparing food, tanning hides, and making tipis and clothes, the men spent their time discussing matters of general import, raiding, hunting, making weapons, or simply idling the hours away at sleep or play, and the children shouted at play or assisted their mothers with their work. In the evenings or on any unusual occasion, the whole camp gave vent to joy or sorrow, anger or enthusiasm, by positive, and at times noisy and colorful, demonstrations. Innumerable lanky, ferocious dogs greeted the approaching stranger by day or gave forth in unison to warn their masters of danger by night.

But what had been a noisy camp could become within a few minutes a lonely prairie with little evidence of previous habitation. On the day before the move, the camp crier rode through the camp making the announcement and describing the new location. The next morning the women were in a hurry to pack and be on their way, for those who were first might obtain choice sites in the new camp. One end

[20] W. S. Nye, *Carbine and Lance: The Story of Old Fort Sill*, 7.

[21] T. A. ("Dot") Babb, *In the Bosom of the Comanches*, 106–107; Nelson Lee, *Three Years among the Comanches*, 127–28; George Catlin, *North American Indians*, II, 72; C. C. Rister, *Border Captives*, 16.